

CLASSY BACKSTOPS ARE NOT NUMEROUS THIS SEASON

By TOMMY CLARK.

THE classy catcher is a rare bird. It seems as if too much time and money in building up great pitching staffs without reckoning on good receivers.

The catcher rather than the pitcher is the real mainspring of the baseball machine. Stationed behind the batsman, he has greater opportunities than the pitcher for observing what a certain batter can and cannot do. Knowing the man with whom he works, he can tell if his curves are breaking right, can make him work slowly when he is inclined to hurry and can make him hurry when he inclines to the contrary.

Watcher of Bases.

The catcher is the chief watcher of the bases when occupied, passes signals for the pitcher throwing to catch runners too far from the bats, and signals the proper time for delivering the ball to the bat.

Aside from all this mental effort, he must snatch off any kind of curve the pitcher lets loose, must dig up wild pitches that go into the ground and must chase the elusive foul fly. He must block runners who slide into the plate and must take his turn at the bat. All this work keeps a man of average intellect or physical ability quite busy.

Yet the catcher, so the majority of the fans think, is a mere machine that stops the curves thrown by the pitcher that the batter misses. Catching is a difficult job in more ways than one, and good catchers are scarce.

Must Use Judgment In Throwing.

There are many catchers in the business with wonderful throwing arms, and still they are not regarded as particularly dangerous; certainly not as great backstops. The chief reason is that they do not use proper judgment in the use of this ability. Base runners soon come to know how well any catcher throws and what liberties can be taken with him. How his lead can be taken off any base and whether the catcher is likely to take a chance on nipping him off second at critical moments. Great catchers seldom throw to bases promiscuously. They go after a base runner only when he becomes too bold and gets too far off the bag, making the play practically sure of success. Base runners soon come to fear such a man more than the one who is continually heaving to the infielders. The catcher who is constantly throwing to get base runners stands more chance of making bad and costly throws than the one who is conservative.

Kling's Great Throwing.

The greatest illustration of the value of the conservative throwing catcher was in the fourth game of the world's series played at Detroit last fall between the Chicago Nationals and the Detroit Americans. The fourth inning of that game was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, ever played on a ball field. The Chicago had a lead of two runs, the Detroit not having scored. That inning O'Leary of the Detroit led off with a base hit, and Crawford rapped out another. Cobb was up next, and the situation was dangerous. Every one who witnessed the game will remember how Brown forced Cobb to bunt, thus forcing O'Leary out at third. Then came Kling's great throw to Tinker at second, catching Crawford off that bag and removing the possibility of a run for the American leaguers should Claude Rossman hit safely. Those two plays—Cobb's bunt to Brown and Kling's throw catching Crawford—insured the second world's championship for the Chicago team.

Importance of Position.

Outguessing a batter and knowing in which direction a foul ball is going are two things no catcher can ever be taught. There are certain general rules about how to mix up curves, speed and slow balls to a batter, but they are not absolute, and it is up to the catcher to figure out what the man with the stick is looking for and then cross him. There is where head-work counts if it doesn't anywhere else. A catcher can be taught the weakness of the batsmen, but he must possess this quality as well or he is merely a mechanical player. The ability to know which way to turn to go after a foul ball is intuitive; it cannot be taught to any man.

Who Is the Greatest?

With Johnny Kling of the Chicago Nationals out, it is a hard task to pick the best catchers in the game today. There are at least five catchers in the National league who seem to run a close race for first honors. If a voter were taken as to who was the greatest backstop in the older organization the men named would undoubtedly be chosen. Archer, who succeeded Moran as the Cubs' regular backstop, is doing the lion's share of the catching for Chicago. Schiel is doing the bulk of the work for the New York Giants.

Bergen is considered the best catcher that Brooklyn has had in years. Gibson is the hero of the Pittsburgh Pirates, while St. Louis fans will swear by Roger Bresnahan. Philadelphia fans and critics alike say that Charley Doolin is Kling's successor.

Chicago fans think that Archer is

backstop. He is an excellent thrower and a great field general. Much of the Phillies' pitchers' good work is due to Doolin's knowledge of the weakness of many star batters.

The way the writer sizes up the catchers is as follows: Gibson, Doolin,

however, and slow on the bases. Owens is a clean catcher and a clever thrower.

Charley Schmidt has looked good ever since he joined the Detroit except in the world's series, where he persisted in playing like an amateur. If the world's series could be thrown

third took the long chance and waved the "go home" signal to Coach Johnson kept on, if going at the top speed he used to travel he called "keeping on." "Make it three, Jimmy," yelled the crowd, and Collins did. He found the ball somewhere out in left field and by a long and accurate throw to

to meet the individual idiosyncrasies of the stars and near stars. If the legal limit were raised to a diameter of three inches, making an increase of a quarter of an inch only, no radical change in the game would be produced, and there would be opportunity for weak batsmen to experiment to their

the room and, noticing Donovan's occupation, said to him:

"I see, Bill, that we will have to pay more for our vaseline in the future on account of the makers having formed a vaseline trust."

"Going to rub it in to us, eh?" remarked Ty Cobb, with a grin. "Big Sam groaned and a look of plying disgust waited its way over the mobile features of the sturdy twirler.

Some of the Leading Catchers of the American and National Leagues.



Bresnahan, Bergen, Schiel, McLean, Archer, Myers and Graham.

Hard to Pick Best In American.

In the American league you can easily name the four classy catchers. Sullivan of Chicago, Criger of St. Louis, Street of Washington and Clarke of Cleveland. Lou Criger for years was rated as the best catcher in the American league, and he is still one of the greatest. He has been at it for about twelve years, however, and is not the catcher physically that he once was.

out Schmidt would rank among the foremost catchers of the two leagues. 't that he cannot be so bad or Detroit would not have won two pennants with Schmidt doing most of the catching. This season Schmidt has done but little work behind the bat, giving way to the youngster Stange. The latter has given an excellent account of himself this season.

Boston has two good catchers in Corrigan and Donohue, the latter be-

Farrell retired the third and last Cleveland runner. The scores' books after it was all over looked a good deal like a page of copy that a reporter for a Chinese newspaper might have prepared.

ZELDA SEARS, AUTHOR.

Miss Zelda Sears, one of the conspicuous members of the cast engaged in the presentation of "The Blue Mouse," was a newspaper woman be-

possible advantage. And if that did not produce the desired change there remains the suggestion to increase slightly the size of the ball itself. This could not be made much larger without a loud protest from the fielders and the possible ruination of the defense, but a slight addition to the size of both bat and ball surely would show results in batting without any other perceptible effect on the game.

PLAYERS LIKE OLD MITTS.

New Gloves Cause All Kinds of Trouble For Diamond Stars.

Baseball players after they break in a glove will hang on to it until it is nothing more than a tissue of rags, for they have an affection for a well broken glove. It is a fact that in many cases glaring errors are made by players who for the time being are wearing some other player's glove or perhaps are just breaking in a new one.

A well broken glove is like a well broken shoe—it is easy to the hand, and the man wearing it learns to repose confidence in his finger covering, and, having such confidence, he can do a great deal better work than he could with a new or a strange glove.

The breaking in of a glove, even by a seasoned old leaguer, is a serious event and is attended with a great deal of anxiety. It is the subject of interest above all others to the rest of the players.

The glove during the breaking in process has to be treated with a variety of oils and greases in order to make it pliable. Every player has some secret preparation to rub on his glove in which he has unbounded faith, but the majority of the spike shoe geniuses use vaseline as a starter. After this has well soaked in then they pour on their oils at different times.

Just before the Detroiters went on to Chicago to play the world series of the game last fall Bill Donovan, the champion pitcher of the American league, bought himself a new glove, and one morning he was in the clubhouse rubbing vaseline on it when Sam Crawford, who used to be a barber and who knows all about the various lubricating preparations, came into

ROBERT EDESON IN FARGE.

One of the interesting events of the coming dramatic season will be the appearance of Robert Edeson, well known as a clever romantic actor, in a Victorian farce entitled "The Noble Spaniard." The author of the farce is W. Somerset Maugham, author of "Lady Frederick" and "Jack Straw." Two of last season's big successes. The role requires much skill in its interpretation, and Mr. Edeson and his admirers are hoping great things from it.

swing started again I guess that 300 mark would not look so far away."

"Yes, Del and I were pals and roommates in those days," broke in Lajoie. "Delahanty was the greatest hitter I ever saw or expect to see again. They talk about Wagner, Ty Cobb and myself as hitters. Why, he was in a class by himself. There is no comparison. I honestly believe that if Del had taken care of himself he would have been leading the league year in and year out with the stick. He was a grand old scout."

The talk became reminiscent and of the days when Del would break up a game and how he could take a pitcher out of a game as well as get the better of an argument. Lajoie was the only player when Delahanty was with Washington who could get along with the famous slugger. Larry could write a book about him if he would take the time.



THREE LEADING HORSE PILOTS OF THE ENGLISH TURF.

Johnny Bull has an abundance of good jockeys this season. Among the lot the splendid riding of Madden, Higgs and Wootton stands out as best. The work of the latter in the saddle has been the sensation of the English turf this season. He is now leading the winning horse pilots with a big majority. Wootton is the youngest jockey on the turf abroad. He has just passed his fifteenth birthday. Wootton piloted his first winner in a race when he was ten years old.

"Nig" Clarke is one of the classiest backstoppers in either league. No receiver can peg any stronger or get the ball away quicker than "Nig," or Justin, as he wishes to be called. Clarke also has more passed balls than some of the other stars. As for Ted Easterly, he is above the average as a catcher, a thrower and a stickler. Both the Cleveland catchers are strong in blocking a runner at the plate and in getting the ball on him, Clarke being the superior of the two. Outside of the first mentioned, the best catchers in the American league are Kleinow of New York, Stephens of St. Louis, Corrigan of Boston, Stange and Schmidt of Detroit and Ira Thomas of the Athletics. Stephens is one of the youngest men in the league, but he has a wise old head on his young shoulders. In fact, McLean regards him as his most valuable catcher.

Washington Has Prize In Street.

In Street Washington has one who ranks with the best. He caught 134 games last year and seldom had a bad day and has done the bulk of the backstopping this year. He gets the ball away like a shot, is a very sure thrower and hits fairly well. By all odds he is the best catcher that broke into either of the big leagues within the last two years. Jack Kleinow of New York has gone back a little. At that he is doing better work than he did in 1908, when he was not in the best condition. When Kleinow is on edge there are few better behind the bat than he. Blair of the New Yorks has done the bulk of the catching, a stickler and excellent thrower. Sweeney, the big boy from Atlanta, is a good youngster, but lacks experience, and may be heard from in the future.

Outside of Billy Sullivan, Chicago has Payne and Owens. Payne catches any pitcher living and do it well. He is erratic in fielding and throwing,

ing a brother to "Jiggs" Donohue of the Chicago White Sox. Pat has many of his older brother's ways on the diamond and is really a fast man. He puts the ball on the runner well at the plate and looks as if he were due to remain in the league. Corrigan is a hardworking backstopper and can be depended upon for good work. He is one of the best batting catchers in the league.

Connie Mack has worked wonders with Ira Thomas. The latter was a failure as a backstop when a member of the New York and Detroit clubs. Thomas is now one of the best batting catchers in the league, a heady backstop and a splendid thrower. Livingston, his partner, looks promising.

In ranking the American catchers the writer would place them in the following order: Sullivan, Clarke, Street, Criger, Stephens, Thomas, Schmidt, Kleinow and Corrigan.

THREE REMARKABLE PLAYS.

Captain Harry Lord of the Boston Americans is a rattling good third baseman, but it is doubtful if he ever threw out three men on the plate on one batted ball, as Jimmy Collins, one of his great predecessors, once did. This happened in Boston in 1902, and three Cleveland players were the victims. Bradley was on second and Jack McCarthy on first, when Dutch Gochnauer sent a short single to left. Collins got the ball and shot it to Catcher Farrell a yard ahead of Bradley. McCarthy was scooting toward third at this juncture, and Farrell threw back to Collins to get Jack. The toss was poor, and McCarthy tried to score. Jimmy moved a good retriever. He chased the ball to left, recovered it and spun it home in time to get McCarthy. Gochnauer, who had been having a nap on second all this time, now started for third, and again Farrell's throw was poor. The coach at

fore she became an actress. At present she is at work on a serial story dealing with stage life, which she is under contract to deliver to an eastern magazine in October.

SCHEMES TO INCREASE HITS.

Latest Expedient Is the Use of Digger Bats and Balls.

Those wisecracks of the baseball world who have been burning up gray matter for several seasons trying to devise a way to help the batsman in his losing struggle against the steadily increasing perfection in the defensive end of the game have overlooked a more simple expedient than has been suggested and one which is worthy of a trial if more batting is desired. Among the schemes devised and discarded have been widening the angle of the foul lines, so as to produce more fair territory for the fielders to protect; putting a handicap on the pitcher by moving his slab farther from the plate or by abolishing the spitball, compelling the outfielders to stand inside a marked square until a ball is hit, so as to prevent "laying for" the batsmen and increasing the resilience of the ball.

So far as noticed, however, no one has suggested increasing the size of the bat itself. It is odd, too, because at any game one hears frequent advice from the spectators urging this or that batsman to "get a broom" or "try a telegraph pole." There seems to be a unanimity of opinion that if the batsman were given a bigger stick he could do better execution, despite the fact few batsmen today use as large bats as the legal limit will permit. Most of the bats will be found, however, to measure close to two and three-quarters inches in diameter at the thickest part, where the batter plans to meet the ball. The differences in bats are chiefly in weight and shape



BEAUTIFUL HEDWIG REICHER, WHO IS TO STAR IN AMERICA.

Fraulein Hedwig Reicher, who has been a reigning success in leading German theaters for several years, is to make her debut as an English speaking actress in the coming season in America. The play selected for her initial appearance in this country is entitled "On the Eve," a drama of contemporaneous Russian life, by Martha Morton, adapted from the German of Leopold Kämpf. Fraulein Reicher is the daughter of Emanuel Reicher, the foremost actor at the German stage, who is the Kaiser's theatrical adviser. She made her debut at the tender age of fifteen as Nora in Ibsen's "Dolls' House," the great Norwegian dramatist being present. She is a woman of great personal charm and is known as the Mary Anderson of the German stage.



HENRY B. HARRIS, PROMINENT THEATRICAL MANAGER.

Henry B. Harris is one of the youngest among theatrical managers who have made both fortune and reputation at the business. At the present time he controls two large New York theaters and is the responsible head of no less than twenty-two attractions of a high order of merit. Mr. Harris began his theatrical career as a program boy. Recently he was elected president of the National Association of Theatrical Producing Managers of America.